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ABSTRACT

This study examines disciplinary judgments of disruptive behaviors by both individuals and dyads differing in moral reasoning. The severity and appropriateness of these judgments are looked at as well as how severe the disruptions are perceived. Several hypotheses are given. Subjects (N-110) were undergraduates in a teacher education program, and, they were ranked according to their "P" scores. They were given the Defining Issues Test and Disruptive Behavior Vignettes, and put into experimental groups. The results support the notion that the level of moral development a prospective teacher has obtained does influence judgmental behavior regarding disciplinary actions. There is a tendency for prospective teachers to perceive behavioral disturbances in direct relationship to their own moral development. (Author/LFB)

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DISCIPLINARY JUDGMENTS OF DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR BY INDIVIDUALS AND DYADS DIFFERING IN MORAL REASONING

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Kohlberg (1963) suggests that the attainment of moral stages is sequential in nature and that individuals progress from a less complex stage of moral development to more complex social stages. Kohlberg and Kramer (1969) have supported the notion of stage sequency and universality in a longitudinal and cross-cultural study. Stage sequency has also been substantiated by examination of the hierarchial structure of moral reasoning (Rest, Turiel, and Kohlberg, 1961: Rest, 1973). These studies have shown that subjects who demonstrate high comprehension of a statement based on a particular moral stage, also demonstrate high comprehension of all statements based on preceeding moral stages. Furthermore regarding comprehension difficulty, subjects find reasoning two stages above their own reasoning (plus two reasoning) more difficult to comprehend than plus one reasoning, and plus one reasoning more difficult than minus one reasoning. These findings provide support for a cumulative order for moral stage difficulty.

If there are stages of moral development, then important questions are: how do changes in moral reasoning and judgments occur, and what are the conditions for these changes? Turiel (1966) explored moral stage changes

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by classifying subjects into Kohlberg's stages and exposing them to different levels of reasoning (minus one, plus one, and plus two reasoning). Exposure to plus one reasoning was the most effective for inducing moral stage change. Keasey (1973) observed opinion and reasoning change of fifth and sixth grade students exposed to opinions with no supportive reasoning; opinions with same stage reasoning; and opinoins with plus one reasoning. Those students exposed to opinions of plus one reasoning showed significantly more opinion and reasoning change than subjects exposed to opinions supported with same stage reasoning.

The social judgment theory of Sherif and Hovland (1961) may offer an explanation for the plus one-minus one reasoning effects found by moral researchers (Turiel, 1966; Keasey, 1973). The findings of psychophysical judgments were extended to judgments of social stimuli (Sherif, Taub, and Hovland, 1958; Sherif and Hovland, 1961). They found that social judgments change as a result of exposure to various anchor stimuli. The placing of an anchor point well beyond a subject's judgment scale tended to influence the subject's judgment away from the anchor point (contrast); while the placing of an anchor immediately below or above a subject's judgment scale tended to cause the subject's judgment to conform toward the anchor (assimilation). Thus, moral judgments may be subject to the same underlying processes as judgments of physical and social stimuli.

Most research in moral development has emphasized cognitive structure and processes rather than behavioral components of moral reasoning, however,

some studies have begun to investigate this relationship. Milgram's (1963) classic study on obedience was further explored by Kohlberg (1965) attempting to relate moral reasoning and moral conduct. Kohlberg interviewed a number of Milgram's subjects, measuring their stage of moral development on the Moral Judgment Interview. He found that the majority of subjects using stage six reasoning refused the experimenter's orders to administer shock to another person; while the majority of subjects at all other stages complied with the orders. In a "Milgram type" study, Turiel and Rothman (1972) investigated the relationship of moral reasoning and behavioral choices. Subjects at stages two, three, and four were instructed to take chips away from a learner when a wron answer was given. The learner was actually a confederate of the experimenter and protested the taking away of the chips. The alternative to continue or to stop taking away the chips was advocated by two confederate "teachers". These alternatives were supported by plus one and minus one reasoning. The tendency was for all subjects to choose the alternative of continuing. Subjects at stage two and three chose to continue regardless of the reasoning used to support the alternatives. Stage four subjects however, chose to stop only when this alternative was supported by plus one reasoning.

Many judgments are made by teachers in the day to day process of education. A clear example of this is the decision of a teacher to use certain classroom management techniques, specifically discipline, for classroom control. The kind of discipline used and the frequency of use

can affect the development of students. Hoffman and Saltzstein (1967) have shown that advanced child development along various moral dimensions is associated with infrequent use of power assertion (taking advantage of authority position) and frequent use of induction (focusing on consequences of child's behavior for others). Crispin (1968) found that teachers differ in the actual number of discipline interventions. He observed that teachers tended to be consistent in their behaviors and that those teachers who employed a high frequency of disciplinary acts with one class did so with other classes. In regard to belief systems, an observational study (Calabresa, 1965) of teachers revealed that educational practices of the teachers were more related to personal beliefs than educational beliefs. It seems reasonable to posit then, that the kind of moral reasoning a teacher exhibits may be one factor regarding the tendency of a teacher to make certain discipline judgments.

OBJECTIVES

The current study examines the disciplinary judgments of disruptive behaviors by both individuals and dyads differing in moral reasoning. The severity and appropriateness of these judgments are looked at as well as how severe the disruptions are perceived. With regard to research in the behavioral aspects of moral development (Milgram, 1963); Kohlberg, 1965; Turiel and Rothman, 1972), it is expected that the disciplinary judgments of individuals with a high degree of principled moral reasoning will differ in degrees of severity and appropriateness from those judgments

of individuals with lower degrees of severity and appropriateness from those judgments of individuals with lower degrees of principled moral reasoning. Secondly, individuals of higher principled reasoning will perceive the severity of classroom disruptions differently than those individuals of lower principled reasoning. Based on social conformity research (Sherif, Taub, and Hovland, 1958; Sherif and Hovland, 1961) and moral stage shift investigations (Turiel, 1966; Keasey, 1973), it is also hypothesized that the disciplinary judgments of low principled moral reasoning will conform toward the judgments of high principled subjects with regard to severity and appropriateness in a dyad condition. Finally, the perceived severity of the disruptive behaviors of the low principled subjects is also expected to conform to the perceived severity of the high principled subjects in a dyad condition.

METHODS

Subjects

One hundred and ten (110) male and female undergraduate students in a teacher education program completed the Defining Issues Test (D.I.T.) (Rest, 1974); and were ranked according to their 'P' scores. Forty-eight (48) students (based on .98 level of power, Kirk, 1968) were chosen from this population by randomly selecting sixteen (16) students from upper, middle, and lower twentieth percentiles.

Apparatus

Defining Issues Test. The complete six-dilemma form of the D.I.T

was administered to assess the moral development of the 110 students. This instrument may be administered to groups and requires approximately thirty (30) minutes to complete. Scoring is accomplished by means of a computer scoring program.

Disruptive Behavior Vignettes. Both vignettes depict two seventeen-year-old white males in a classroom. The recordings were fifteen (15) seconds in length with a five second freeze frame at the end. The first vignette depicted a sever disturbance by presenting the two students scuffling in a classroom. A second videotaped vignette presented a nonsevere disturbance of the same two students laughing and making disturbing noises.

Experimental Groups. Each student was assigned to one of three levels of moral development based on the 'P' score obtained from the D.I.T. The subjects were then also paired into dyads so that six (6) possible combinations were obtained. These groups were identified by the combinations of moral development levels of the dyads. Th s Group 1 contained four dyads of high principled (HH) students; Group 2, four dyads of medium principled (MM) students; Group 3, four dyads of low principled (LL) students; Group 4, four dyads of high-medium principled (HM) students; Group 5, four dyads of high-low (HL) students; and Group 6, four dyads of medium-low principled (ML) students. Thus, the first three dyad combinations are "matched" students and the last three combinations are "mixed."

RESULTS

Perceived Severity of Behavioral Vignettes

A 2 (disturbance conditions) X 3 (moral groups) ANOVA with repeated measures on the disturbance conditions approached significance regarding how severe the subjects (H-ML) perceived the disturbances, $F(2,45) = 2.99$, $p < .06$, with the lower principled (L) subjects perceiving both disturbances as more severe than the higher principled (H) subjects. A 2 (disturbance condition) X 3 (matched dyads) ANOVA with repeated measures on the disturbance conditions showed that matched dyads with higher principled reasoning (HH) perceived both disturbances as less severe than lower principled dyads (LL) ($F(1,21) = 84.16$, $p < .05$).

Severity and Appropriateness of Judgments

Differences among the three groups (H-M-L) were in the expected direction, though not significant with respect to severity, $F(2,45) = 2.40$, $p < .10$ and appropriateness, $F(2,45) = 3.10$, $p < .06$. The judgments of higher principled subjects were rated as less severe and more appropriate (Figure 8) than the disciplinary judgments of lower principled subjects.

A 2 (disturbance condition) X 3 (moral groups) ANOVA with repeated measures was also used to analyze the disciplinary judgment of matched moral dyads, $F(2,21) = 7.35$, $p < .05$, with higher principled dyads making less severe judgments than lower principled dyads. Though there were no significant differences among groups for appropriateness, higher principled dyads tended to make judgments that were rated as more appropriate than the judgments of lower principled dyads.

Change Scores

A 2 (disturbance condition) X 3 (matched dyads) ANOVA with repeated measures on disturbance conditions was used to examine the change in perceived severity of disturbances and judgment appropriateness and severity. No significant change occured on any of these measurements when a subject was put into a dyad situation with another subject of the same moral level or different levels. However, there were significant interaction effects in the mixed groups.

COMMENTS

The results of this study support the notion that the level of moral development a prospective teacher has attained does influence judgmental behavior regarding disciplinary actions. Further, the tendency for prospective teachers to perceive behavioral disturbances differently is also related to moral development.

The implications of moral development theory on our educational system are vast. If the judgments of prospective teachers are being influenced by moral reasoning, then it seems reasonable to posit that our teacher education programs may wish to address themselves to this issue with regard to teacher training. If the intellectual and moral maturity of teachers does affect the academic, as well as the emotional experience of students, then it would seem that teacher education programs would want to maximize the opportunities for prospective teachers to develop this maturity to their full potential. After all, "ultimate moral motives and

forces are nothing more or less than social intelligence...at work in the service of social interests and aim" (Dewey, 1909).